The Gift of Jesus

JESUS IS GOD'S PRECIOUS GIFT TO ME.



MEMORY VERSE

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Word of the Week—Appreciate: To appreciate is to be grateful. To understand and accept the value of a person, act, or object. For example: Mrs. Jones appreciated the neighbor's help.

This week's lesson is based on Luke 2:1-7; *The Desire of Ages,* pp. 43, 44; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 697, 698. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story,* vol. 7, pp. 27-34.

SUNDAY

A Promised Gift

Mary's pregnant belly grew bigger and bigger. And so did her excitement. God's promised Savior God was growing inside her, and He would soon be born!

The promise of a Savior had been made long ago to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they had sinned. God's promise filled them with hope.

Then faithful followers of God such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses had also looked forward to the arrival of the promised Savior. They too had believed, without ever seeing God's promise fulfilled—they had faith (Hebrews 11).

Later Jesus would tell a doubting disciple how much He appreciates the faith of those who didn't get to see Him in the flesh. He said, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

Mary must have patted her belly in wonder to think that *she* would see Him soon! She treasured the words the angel had spoken to her: the "Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The promised gift would soon arrive, and it would be the very best gift of all. Why was God giving this gift? **Read John 3:16** (your memory verse).

The people in Mary's village, across Judea, and all around the world didn't know that God's gift of love was about to arrive. They didn't know that the tiny baby quietly growing inside Mary was *God*, *God the Son,* and that He was about to be born as a human being! Hardly anyone knew what was about to happen; but in time, God would make sure that everyone would have the opportunity to accept and appreciate His precious gift. Oh, how He hoped that everyone would.

Do: Make up some actions for your memory verse. Use the actions each time you say or sing it.

Pray: Thank God for always fulfilling His promises. Ask for more faith to believe in Him and His Word.

Think . . . Then Talk About It

- *Look around your house and notice gifts that others have given to you or your family. Think about how precious some of them are. How much more precious is the gift of Jesus to you?*





MONDAY

A Bumpy Donkey Ride

Messengers rushed from town to town. They were spreading some important news for Caesar Augustus, the great emperor of Rome. What news did they share? Read Luke 2:1, 3.

This was big news for Joseph and Mary. They would need to travel to the town where their family had come from, for their names must be put on the tax list too. They needed to make the 70-mile (112-kilometer) journey from their home in Nazareth to the town of Bethlehem. They both came from the family of King David, who had been born there.

Mary tried to get comfortable on the little donkey as it clip-clopped along beside Joseph. *Clip-clop. Bump-bump*. It was a tiring, bumpy journey, for it was almost time for Mary's baby to be born.

God had told Micah the prophet that His Son would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Little donkey plodded on slowly. They were headed right to that little town. It was just as God had said!

This message from God about the future was called a prophecy. It was an important clue to help God's people get ready for the arrival of His gift. God had already told His prophets about His Son (Isaiah 9:6), and He had told His people when He would come (Daniel 9:25). God didn't want His people to miss the arrival of His precious gift! He had told them in the Bible scrolls *who* the gift was, *when* it would be given, and *where*. God is so thoughtful and kind.

Do: Find Nazareth and Bethlehem on a Bible map. Use a map of your country to find another town that is about 70 miles (112 kilometers) from yours. Think about how you would get there, and if you could walk that far. You might like to try walking one mile!

Pray: Ask God to help you appreciate the wonderful words in His Bible.

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *Amos 3:7 says, "Before the Lord God does anything, He tells His servants the prophets" (ICB). Can you think of other times in the Bible when God told people ahead of time what would happen?*
- *Do you think God's people always appreciated being told what would happen? Why or why not?*

TUESDAY

No Room, No Room, No Room

The sun beat down on the rough and rocky road toward Bethlehem. Mary sighed as she gently patted the hot mane of the little donkey. Joseph wiped the sweat from his own brow. Together they walked on, mile after weary mile.

The road became crowded with travelers. Families chatted, donkeys plodded along, and carts rolled with them. All were heading to the same little town, following the orders of Caesar Augustus. Finally the mud brick buildings of Bethlehem came into view. What a welcome sight after four or five days of dusty travel.

Joseph and Mary entered the town gates and joined the crowds of people looking for a place to stay. Tired and homeless, they walked the length of the narrow street, asking for somewhere to sleep. But always the answer was no. No room in the crowded inn, no room in a cozy home, no room in a rooftop lean-to; and no room in anyone's heart for a tired, pregnant young woman.

In the town of King David's birth, a baby king was about to be born. He would be the most important king ever, for He is called "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Revelation 17:14). But the people of Bethlehem didn't even know it.

If the people of this chosen town had studied the Bible scrolls, they would have been joyfully praying and waiting for the promised Savior, just as Zacharias and Elizabeth were. God would have shown them the wonderful thing that was about to happen, right in their very own town. They may even have been fortunate enough to have Him be born in *their* home, or *their* inn. But they didn't pay attention, wait, or pray. They were just too busy . . .

The people of Bethlehem would not get to see or appreciate the birth of God's precious gift, because they weren't looking. Sometimes we don't notice God's gifts either, because we aren't looking. God loves us and knows we will be happy when we notice and appreciate His little gifts all around us.

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *How would you have felt if you had been Mary or Joseph in today's story?*
- *Read* **James 1:17**. *How good are you at noticing and appreciating God's gifts?*

Do: Draw some gift boxes on a page. Inside each, write some of the gifts God has given you. Thank Him for them.

Pray: Ask God to help you to notice His gifts.

Mission Challenge: It's important to notice the good things others do in our community. This week, spend time noticing which people in your community serve others. Share what you've noticed at Sabbath School this week.



WEDNESDAY

A Place to Lay Their Heads

A cow mooed and a sheep bleated as Joseph opened the creaky door and shone the lantern into the stable. Finally they had found a place to stay—in a stable. It wouldn't be a nice place to sleep, but Joseph and Mary appreciated a roof over their heads. They quietly made a comfortable bed on a pile of clean straw among the animals. They were content, for they trusted God.

Lying on that bed of straw, Mary may have remembered what the angel Gabriel had told her about the baby she would soon give birth to. "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). Even though Mary trusted God, she may have wondered why someone so important would be born where the animals lived, instead of in a palace fit for the King of kings.

But even this was part of God's plan. If Jesus had been born in a palace, some people may have accepted Him only because of His noble place of birth, and others may have felt they were not worthy of God's gift. God wanted people to know, right from the birth of Jesus, that the precious gift of His Son was for *everyone*, no matter who they were or where they came from. God's gift is for you too!

Like Mary and Joseph, you can still trust God when things don't go according to your plans. There are many things we can't control, but we can always trust God to work through all our circumstances. In Philippians 4:11 Paul writes, "I have learned to be satisfied with the things I have and with everything that happens" (ICB).

God loves you dearly, and you have the precious gift of His Son. He can help you to appreciate and be satisfied with the things you have.

Do: If possible, visit a farm. Notice the sights, sounds, and smells of the animals and the barn. Alternatively, look up some pictures in a book or, with the help of an adult, online videos of life on a working farm.

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *Read **John 3:16** (memory verse). Which word reminds you that the gift of God's Son is for everyone?*
- *Read **Philippians 4:11** (above). How satisfied are you with the things you have and the things that happen to you?*

Pray: Ask God to help you appreciate what you have.



THURSDAY

The Birth of the King

Inside the little stable a lantern glowed soft and warm. Joseph and Mary gazed in wonder at the tiny baby snuggled in a manger of hay. This was God's Son! God's precious gift had been born in the night. He was the best way God could say to everyone in the whole wide world, *I love you!*

Peace and joy overflowed from Mary's heart as she softly spoke her baby's name: *"Jesus."* Such a beautiful name, so full of meaning. What does the name mean? **Read Matthew 1:21**.

The meaning of a name was very important in Bible times. Whenever Jesus' name was spoken, people would know He was their Savior.

Jesus would be called by other names too, and each one had a special meaning. Isaiah 7:14 says, "She will have a son, and she will name him Immanuel" (ICB), which means, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

Several Bible writers called Jesus the "Messiah," which means "the anointed one, the chosen one." God's priests and kings were anointed to show that their important work had His blessing. Jesus had God's blessing when He was chosen for the important work of saving people.

Isaiah also wrote about other names that Jesus would have. In Isaiah 9:6 the Bible says, "For unto us a child is born. . . . And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Jesus was just too amazing to have only one name! All of heaven rejoiced at His birth, for they knew that Jesus' names described Him well. He truly was the wonderful, mighty, peaceful, everlasting God who came to our world as the Savior.

What an amazing gift!

Parent Faith Talk: Share with your child what the gift of Jesus means to you.

Do: People often publish the birth of their babies in the newspaper or on social media. Write or create a birth announcement for Baby Jesus.

Pray: Thank Jesus for coming to this earth to show you how very much He loves you.

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *Which of Jesus' names is your favorite? Why?*
- *In what ways could you appreciate Jesus, the best gift God could ever give you?*

FRIDAY

The Gift Is Given

In the stillness of the night in Bethlehem, God's precious gift had been given. While the town slept, Baby Jesus drew His first breath. Mary had wrapped Him, cuddled Him, and fed Him. Such a tiny body for God to fit into! But from His tininess would come big, BIG things. Jesus would live and die to show the whole world a beautiful picture of God's love.

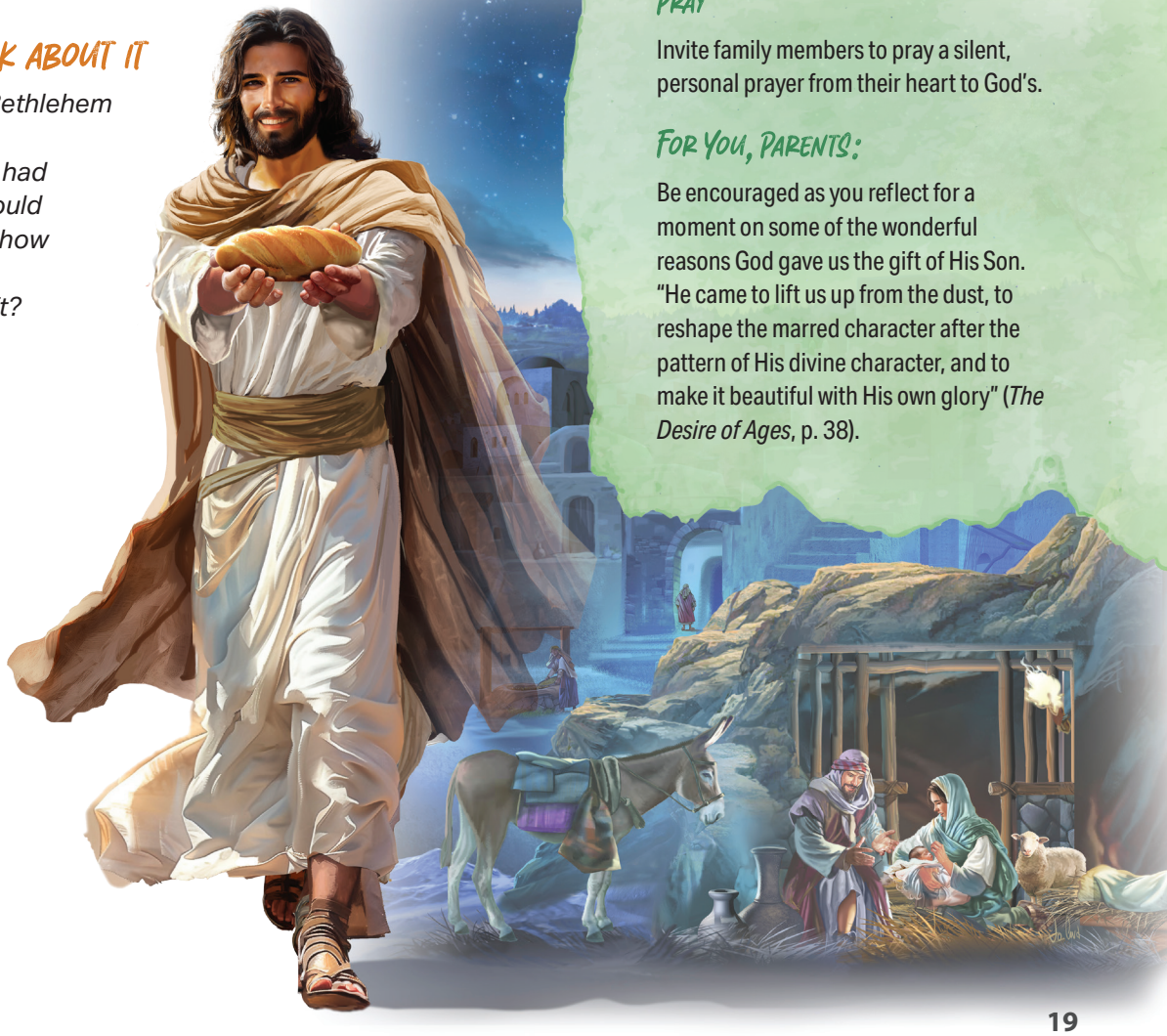
One day as an adult, the grown-up Jesus called Himself "the bread of life" (John 6:35). He said this, for He knew that people cannot live without bread (food), and neither could they live happy and meaningful lives without Him in their hearts. They couldn't live *forever* without Him either. Jesus could do for us what no one else could.

Jesus truly was God's precious gift, given in the town of Bethlehem, which means "house of bread." Jesus, the "bread of life," was born in the "house of bread"! How amazing that even the name of the town of Jesus' birth could speak a message about Him into the hearts of people.

What message is God speaking into your heart today?

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *If you had lived in Bethlehem and known that the Savior of the world had been born, what would you have done to show how much you appreciated the gift?*



Friday Night

Share and praise

- Sing "Away in a Manger." You might like to find and sing other hymns about Jesus' birth.
- As a family, discuss what God's gift of Jesus means to you personally.
- Jesus' names had special meanings. Find names that you like the meaning of.

Family Journal

- Christmas is a time people in many cultures around the world remember the birth of Jesus. After studying the story this week, name some new things you could share with friends about Jesus' birth.
- This story has reminded me to tell God that I appreciate . . .

Pray

Invite family members to pray a silent, personal prayer from their heart to God's.

For You, Parents:

Be encouraged as you reflect for a moment on some of the wonderful reasons God gave us the gift of His Son. "He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 38).

SABBATH

And the Gift Goes On . . .

The gift of Jesus is the best gift ever! In small ways we can show Jesus how much we appreciate the gift. What can we do? *Read Matthew 25:34-40.*

There are so many people that need help and love in our world. In this beautiful verse Jesus tells us that every time we are kind to others, we are being kind to Him. This is a practical way we can tell Jesus that we appreciate what He has done for us. Today, make creative plans as a family to show kindness to others.

Create a Kindness Box

- *Find a little box or container (preferably with a lid), paper, scissors, and colorful pens or pencils.*
- *Cut the paper into smaller pieces that will fit inside the box.*
- *Invite family members and/or friends to think of something kind they could do for someone else. It may or may not be someone who is with you right now.*
- *Give everyone a small piece of paper and have them write the name of their chosen person at the top. Then they can write or draw something kind they will do for that person during the week. Alternatively, they could write something kind about that person that they will then give to them.*
- *Have them place the completed pieces of paper in the box and explain that next Sabbath you will have a sharing time when each person will tell what they did, how it went, and how they felt afterward.*
- *Gift-wrap the box to be opened next week. You might like to write Matthew 25:40 on a tag and attach it to the box. "I tell you the truth. Anything you did for any of my people here, you also did for me" (Matthew 25:40, ICB).*



